

# Winter in South Florida: Everglades & More! With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



**February 19 – 24, 2021**

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Naturalist Journeys, LLC







## Tour Summary

6-Day / 5-Night Florida Birding Tour with Carlos Sanchez  
\$1995, from Miami  
Airport is Miami International (MIA)

Find yourself far away from Florida's bustling, tourist-packed theme parks on a Naturalist Journeys' adventure that takes you deep into Florida's wild side.

South Florida is deservedly one of the classic birding destinations of the United States. Just barely above the Caribbean tropics, South Florida's climate and geography isolate it from the rest of the country. Because of its geographically unique position, Florida is a crossroads between the temperate north and the sultry Caribbean south. Indeed, about a dozen bird species of West Indian origin reach the northern limits of their range here; many of these West Indian species live nowhere else in the United States. Winter is an especially wonderful season to visit. Unlike the rest of the country, the southern tip of Florida is warm and frost-free due to its proximity to the Gulf Stream. As a result, the southeast corner of the Sunshine state is home to an incredible assortment of vireos, flycatchers, raptors, shorebirds, and warblers—up to twenty-five warbler species in a winter season—in addition to all the wonderful herons, storks, spoonbills, and other waterbirds. Indeed, the excellence of winter birding in South Florida is one of North America's secrets; winter is the time when the region's avian diversity peaks.

On this tour, we cover the southern third of the state in search of the many specialty and wintering birds on offer. We begin by exploring the justifiably famous and unique Everglades National Park, otherwise known as the River of

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Bird the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale metro area for exotics from around the world, including Spot-breasted Oriole, Red-whiskered Bulbul, and White-winged Parakeet, among lush, tropical gardens and landscaping
- ✓ Immerse yourself in subtropical sawgrass prairies, cypress domes, tropical hardwood hammocks, pinelands, and mangrove swamps of Everglades National Park
- ✓ Explore Florida Bay from the Flamingo Visitor Center in Everglades National Park to observe large concentrations of wintering shorebirds, waders, raptors, and maybe even American Flamingo
- ✓ Seek tropical bird species that occur nowhere else in the USA: Mangrove Cuckoo, Short-tailed Hawk, White-crowned Pigeon, and more
- ✓ Visit the unique Florida pineland ecosystem as we seek Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, and endemic wildflowers
- ✓ Wonder at the bustling heron and stork rookeries of Green Cay and Wakodahatchee Wetlands, where these birds display and nest at close range – yes, even in January!
- ✓ Observe Florida's only endemic bird, the charismatic Florida Scrub-Jay, in its native oak-scrub habitat





Grass, in search of Short-tailed Hawk, Roseate Spoonbill, West Indian Manatee, American Crocodile, and more. A scheduled boat trip out onto Florida Bay allows us to experience a rich bounty of wintering shorebirds, herons, eagles, and perhaps even American Flamingo. We also spend time birding in Miami, a city with a decidedly Caribbean flair, in search of colorful exotics such as Spot-breasted Oriole, White-winged Parakeet, and Red-whiskered Bulbul, as well as native species like White-crowned Pigeon, Burrowing Owl, and a score of warblers. On the last leg of the main tour, we visit a series of well-planned wetlands in Palm Beach, where nearly all the Florida wetland specialties occur: Wood Stork, Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, and so much more. We also visit oak-scrub for Florida's only endemic bird, the Florida Scrub-Jay.

## Itinerary

### **Fri., Feb. 19 Arrivals**

You arrive today at Miami International Airport. Once the group has gathered, we enjoy a welcome dinner with an orientation before we depart on our birding adventure in the morning.

*Accommodations south of Miami at Kendall (D)*

### **Sat., Feb. 20 Everglades National Park**

Published in 1947, Marjory Stoneman Douglas' *The Everglades: River of Grass* highlighted the uniqueness of the Everglades. Lying at the southern tip of the state, the Everglades is a vast subtropical sawgrass prairie broken only by cypress domes, tropical hardwood hammocks, pinelands, and mangrove swamps. There is nowhere else in the United States with such a decidedly tropical suite of habitats.

Throughout the day we work along the length of the main park road that terminates in Flamingo, exploring these various habitats for several birds difficult to see anywhere else in the country such as Short-tailed Hawk and Wood Stork, along with a strong supporting cast of various wintering songbirds such as Black-throated Blue, Pine, Black-throated Green, Prairie, and Magnolia Warbler. American Crocodile and West Indian Manatee are





possible at the marina in Flamingo. The highlight of the day will be a scheduled boat trip out onto Florida Bay, where we will be able to access extensive mudflats that host hundreds of waterbirds and raptors: Bald Eagle, Osprey, Roseate Spoonbill, Great 'White' Heron, Reddish Egret, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Whimbrel, Wilson's Plover, Black Skimmer, and so many more. If we are lucky, we might even see American Flamingo!

*Accommodations south of Miami at Kendall (B,L,D)*

## **Sun., Feb. 21 Miami Metro Area**

The nearly tropical climate and exotic vegetation of the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale metropolitan area offers a unique landscape of opportunity for a myriad of introduced bird species from all over the world. We spend the morning in Miami exploring this urban landscape in search of exotics such as Spot-breasted Oriole, White-winged Parakeet, Red-whiskered Bulbul, and Common Myna. However, introduced species are only a small fraction of the avifauna of Miami, a county which claims one of the longest bird lists east of the Mississippi River. The parks and preserves peppered throughout the city provide habitat for a wide array of both resident and wintering species that include White-crowned Pigeon, Piping Plover, Burrowing Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Summer Tanager, Bronzed Cowbird, Loggerhead Shrike, and so many more.

*Accommodations south of Miami at Kendall (B,L,D)*

## **Mon., Feb. 22 Tamiami Trail | Green Cay | Wakodahatchee Wetlands**

This morning, we travel along the road that skirts the northern edge of Everglades National Park—Tamiami Trail. Open sawgrass prairie north of the road regularly holds small numbers of Snail Kite, and we make several stops along the way to get good views of one. As we continue westward, the habitat quickly changes over to bald cypress forest. The trees are covered in a wide variety of bromeliads, orchids, and other epiphytic plants, making for a very picturesque and lush scene.

After a delicious lunch in Miami, we head north to Green Cay and Wakodahatchee Wetlands, two artificially created wetlands that host nearly all of Florida's wetland specialties: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Least Bittern, Limpkin, Gray-headed Swamphen, and Purple Gallinule. The rookeries at Wakodahatchee Wetlands should be very active at this time of year, providing excellent photo opportunities of nesting Double-crested Cormorant, Anhinga, Wood Stork, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, and others.

*Accommodations at the Hampton Inn, Juno Beach (B,L,D)*

## **Tues., Feb. 23 Jonathan Dickinson State Park | Palm Beach**

After an early breakfast, we drive to Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The pine flatwood and oak-scrub communities in this lovely park are more typical of Central Florida. As a result, several species reach the southern limit of their distribution here, such as Bachman's Sparrow and the endemic Florida Scrub-Jay. Other



species we should encounter as we explore this part of Florida include Wood Duck, Bald Eagle, Pileated Woodpecker, and Sandhill Crane. We will also be able to see Hobe Mountain, which is the highest natural point south of Lake Okeechobee at 86 feet above sea level!

Later in the day, we visit a couple of sites to the south in Palm Beach County for some additional birding: Peaceful Waters Sanctuary, Okeethee Park, and Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge all offer a slightly different mix of species depending on habitat and prevailing water levels. Along with large numbers of herons, egrets, and other large waders, we have more chances to see American Bittern, Roseate Spoonbill, Snail Kite, King Rail, Hooded Merganser, and more.

*Accommodations at the Hampton Inn, Juno Beach (B,L,D)*

## **Wed., Feb. 24 Departures**

After some morning birding at a coastal site or two as we make our way back south, the main tour ends at Miami International Airport. Please schedule departing flights around noon or later. (B)



### **Guide Carlos Sanchez**

Born in Miami, Florida, Carlos has had a fascination with wildlife since childhood. In college he began to bird in earnest throughout Florida, South America, and even Australia. Currently, Carlos sits on the board of the Tropical Audubon Society, is a regular contributor to the birding blog 10,000 Birds, and leads local tours through his company, EcoAvian Tours. He has also been a resident guide at lodges in both Ecuador and Brazil.



## Cost of the Journey

### Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

### Travel Information

The arrival airport for this tour is Miami International Airport (MIA) in Miami, FL. Please plan to arrive in Miami no later than 3:00 PM on February 19. Plan on departures after noon on February 24.

### Cost of the Journey

Cost of the main journey is \$1995 DBL / \$2395 SGL based on double occupancy, from Miami, FL (MIA).

This cost includes: accommodations for five nights, most meals as specified in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner), airport welcome and transfer or hotel shuttle, land transportation during the journey, professional guide services, park and other entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Cost does not include: round-trip airfare to and from Miami, items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, and gratuities for luggage handling or personal services. With fewer than 6 participants, a small-group surcharge (typically \$100 – \$300 per participant) may apply, or we may request that you pick up the cost of a few additional dinners in lieu of this surcharge.

### Photo Credits:

Tricolored Heron, Carlos Sanchez (CASA); Northern Parula, CASA; Loggerhead Shrike, CASA; Purple Gallinule, CASA; Bronzed Cowbird, CASA; Anhinga, CASA; Barred Owl, CASA; Painted Bunting, CASA; Burrowing Owl, CASA; American Crocodile, CASA; Florida Scrub-Jay, CASA; Eastern Meadowlark, CASA; Black-and-white Warbler, CASA; Roseate Spoonbill, CASA;



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